ACCENTS AND DIGRAPHS
IN THE PETERBOROUGH CHRONICLE

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1. The most influential writing system in Europe is based on the alphabet developed in Italy and used by the Romans. Its importance increased during the Middle Ages as the vehicle of the western type Christianity. In Mediaeval Europe the appearance of writing usually was connected to conversion to the Christian faith and writing meant the use of the Latin alphabet. In these cases orthography referred to the attempts to adjust the Latin symbols to represent the speech sounds of the various languages. An ideal writing system is considered to be one which is phonetic, and provides a separate symbol to each of the speech sounds. Although the Latin alphabet answered these requirements where the Latin language was concerned, its set of symbols proved to be insufficient to mark all the sounds of the various other languages. This insufficiency is most remarkable in the case of the vowel sounds.

2. In Latin, though vowel length could be phonemic (e. g. *pŏpulus* "people": *pōpulus* "poplar tree"), it appeared frequently as a phonetic feature which depended on a combination of word stress and syllabic structure. For this reason no special means was devised to indicate vowel length.

In Germanic languages vowel quantity was a strictly phonemic feature. In Old English numerous minimal pairs can be found based on a quantitative opposition (e. g. *god* noun : *gōd* adjective, etc.). Vowel length was entirely independent from phonetic environment or syllabic structure. However, long vowels appeared in the stressed syllable which in the case of Germanic languages is the first root-syllable (with the exception of the prefixed nouns where the prefix bore the stress). For centuries, i. e. all through the Old English and early part of the Middle English period, there was no systematic attempt to regularise the representation of vowel length or to mark quantitative differences in general.

3. Early Middle English orthography shows little change with the introduction of Anglo-Norman scribal traditions. In Old French, earlier Latin quantitative differences, however restrictive they were, were soon changed into qualitative ones (Rohlfs 1960, 42/10). It was only later through various sound changes e. g. monophthongisation of diphthongs, open syllable lengthening, compensatory lengthening following the loss of tauto-syllabic consonants, etc. that quantitative oppositions developed in the French language. At the beginning of the period of the Anglo-Norman scribal influence in Britain these phonetic changes were at their earliest stage; thus the results of early Norman monophthongisation: OF /ei/ > An /ɛ:/, OF /ie/ > AN /e:/ appears in the spelling forms ⟨ei⟩ in the *Domesday Book* (cf. Feilitzen 1937) and ⟨ie⟩ in the *Eadwines Canterbury Psalter* (Schlemilch 1914: 21).

4. Those languages where vowel quantity is a phonemic feature, had to invent their own means to indicate the difference between short and long vowels. The following devices can be found in various languages:

a) diacritics: especially the acute and to a lesser extent the circumflex; e.g. French *paté*, *père*, *île*; Hungarian *kér*, *tőr*, etc.;

b) doubling of vowel graphs: Finnish *laakso*, English *meet*, *root*, etc.;

c) digraphs: these notations can be based on the result of sound changes, e.g. the monophthongisation of diphthongs: English *chief* through Anglo-Norman changes mentioned above; or on phonetic analysis: English *meat*, *boat* as opposed to the doubled graphs;

d) "mute" ⟨e⟩, in languages where the loss of a final vowel was accompanied by the lengthening of the preceding vowel in an open syllable. Thus the retention of the graph of the lost vowel in the written form virtually re-creates the lengthening environment: French *table*, English *name*;

e) introduction of consonant graphs, the loss of sounds they represented caused compensatory lengthening elsewhere: German *lehren*.

Another, though less frequent possibility is the marking of the shortness of the vowels

f) by the "brevis" ⟨˘⟩ e.g. in Mediaeval Latin and to a lesser extent in Old English manuscripts;

g) by the doubling the consonant graphs following a short vowel. This means is applicable only in languages where originally the existence or development of long consonants was only permitted after a short vowel, and the language at a later stage gave up the opposition in consonant quantity: English *written*.

5. The *Peterborough Chronicle* is one of the earliest Middle English texts. In its copied part, especially in the first (Part I) up to 1069, spellings conform to the West Saxon scribal traditions; though Part II (1070—1120) is also conservative in this respect. The two Peterborough Continuations (Part IV and Part V) are more interesting as they show an increasing departure from the Old English traditions and especially in Part V (1132—1154) the Anglo-Norman influence can be observed, e.g. in the case of the consonants: ⟨th, uu, W⟩ side by side with the earlier runic notations "thorn" and "wynn", the use of ⟨g⟩ from the Carolingian Minuscules instead of the Insular ʒ, etc. (Clark 1984). Though the spelling of these portions appears to strive for a phonetic representation (e.g. ⟨o⟩ for OE *ā*: *more*, etc.), the marking of vowel length does not appear as a general aim. The present paper is therefore intended as a kind of a study to size up the possibilities of an analysis of the orthographical development which occurred during the Middle English period.

6. *Diacritics*. Accents and brevis are devices to mark vowel quantity. Of the various accents, which are the means to indicate vowel lenght, *acute* is the more widely used one in languages where the Latin alphabet was adopted and it was felt necessary to mark the quantitative vowel oppositions. Acute was frequently used in OE manuscripts too. According to analyses its use, however, was not unambiguous. Campbell summed it up as marking the

— long vowel of monosyllables both alone or in compounds.

— monosyllable prefixes

— inflected monosyllables, alone or in compounds.

In addition it might occur on short words and prefixes of verbs, conjunctions and proclitic words, even *se* and can mark diaeresis (Campbell 1959: 13; Luick 1964: 78f).

Sisam noted that in the MSS Bodley 340 and 342 of *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies* acutes occurred to mark

— long vowels (*fótum*)

— short vowels in heavy syllables (*búrgum*)

— the short vowel of a stressed prefix (*ún asecgentlice*)

— and less frequently a short vowel in an open syllable (*wúninge*)

and remarked that with all probability accentuation was used in these manuscripts to facilitate oral delivery of the homilies (Sisam 1963: 186f). This remark, which strictly refers to MSS Bodley 340 and 342, seems to have been generalised by Brunner (1964: 15). The examples from the *Peterborough Chronicle* do not justify such a generalisation. Accents are too few and far between, and moreover too haphazard, to function to facilitate oral rendering.

Acutes were applied in Parts I and II, in Part III (the Peterboroguh Interpolations in Parts I and II) are just a couple of occurrences, mostly in place-names, which could have been copied out of contemporary documents from which the texts were translated into English; and cease altogether in Parts IV and V (Cecily Clark, however, does not even mention acutes in her edition of the post-Conquest portions, i.e. Part II).

Examples in the *Peterborough Chronicle* agree entirely with the cases enumerated both by Campbell and Sisam, and are represented in separate colums for Part I and II below:

Long vowels	Part I	Part II
monosyllables	28	36
monosyllables as second elements in compounds	7	2
disyllables		8
stressed prefixes	3	4
unstressed (verb) prefixes	2	8
prepositions, adverbs	46	10
Short vowels		
closed monosyllables	7	4
prepositions, adverbs, proclitics	21	6
stressed prefixes	4	12
second syllable	1	2

Of the above examples, it seems that all the cases for adverbs belong together, irrespective of the quantity of the vowel. The examples start being more frequent in the Annals for the late tenth century and represent instances where the earlier prefixed verbs give place to a new construction: verb plus adverbial e.g. *up eode → eode úpp*. In this case the acute clearly is used to mark stress and not length. Other cases of marked adverbs occur in phrases with double prepositions: *út ofer sae* and in constructions as *ne ínn ne út*, etc. The adverb *ā* "ever" frequently occurs with the acute: *d* (6 examples) in which case the marking can be analysed as both that of length but also the emphasis of a very short word. The two occurrences of *íí*, the oblique form of the place-name *Iona*, seem to be similar: in addition to the doubled graph there is the double acute to elevate the very short word out of a line of minims (Brunner 1964:42).

In Part I there is a single example where the acute marks the short vowel of the second, and therefore unstressed syllable: *wunían*. It can be analysed as an (only) example of the marking of diareasis, or else (and more probably) is an error which occurred in the course of the copying, as *wúnian* occurs several times in the parallel text of Text D of the *Chronicle*. In Part II we found *aelpíg* which can indicate the monophthongised form of /ij/>/i:/, which can again be referred to writings like *Normandíge* in Text D.

7. Another frequent means to indicate long phonemes is to double the relevant graphs. The practice is quite general in the notation of long consonants and fairly frequent in the case of vowels too in all languages using the Latin alphabet. In Continental use, however, the doubling of vowel-graphs denoting long phenomes was an alternative to the application of acutes, usually excluding one another (Kniezsa, I. 1952 : 54). In Old English manuscripts the doub-

ling of consonant-graphs was a general way to indicate consonant length, while the doubling of vowel graphs on the other hand was, although frequent, an inconsistent way of marking long vowels, often coupled with the employment of acute(s). The *Peterborough* examples are extremely few in number and are restricted to Parts I and II and every doubled form is additionally marked with double acutes: *áá, íí*, and one *hii* (Personal Pronoun 3rd. pl.) in Part III. All three words are very short, and *ā* is not only a monosyllable but also consists of a single vowel. Doubling of the graphs and the additional acutes raise them out of a row of minims (cf. also examples supplied by Brunner 1964 : 16). There are no further examples in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, and no references could be found to doubling in early Middle English texts (Schlemilch 1914).

8. *Digraphs.* Sound changes, especially mergers could create the basis for new notations: the monophthongisation of diphthongs for example could supply a new means to indicate vowel length by the application of the graphs of the former diphthong to the original long monophthong. Thus OF /ei/ was monophthongised to /ɛ:/ in Anglo-Norman at the beginning of the eleventh century, and ⟨ei⟩ was used by Anglo-Norman scribes to note OE *æ* in *Doomsday Book*, thus indicating vowel quantity by the new digraph spelling. There is one similar instance in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, which, however, still appears on the level of reversed spelling, but all the same can be regarded as an early example of marking long vowels.

By the end of the OE period post-palatal final or preconsonantal [g]>[j] became vocalised and together with the preceding vowel formed a new set of diphthongs /æi/, /ei/, /ii/. The process is already apparent from the spellings of the post-palatal /j/ in Part V, appearing as ⟨i⟩.

medial	Part I	II.	III.	IV.	V.
⟨g⟩	100%	97,5%	84%	61%	24%
⟨i⟩	—	2,5	16	39	76
final					
⟨g⟩	94,5	72,5	62	26	17
⟨i⟩	5,5	23,5	38	74	83

Examples: *dæi, dæies*, etc.

If the preceding vowel was *i/ī*, the result was *ii* which soon was monophthongised to /i:/. This development is proved by the numerous exemples where ⟨g⟩ is omitted: *ligþ>liþ, anie*, etc. As a form of reversed spelling ⟨g⟩ appears after *-i* if it marked a long vowel: *hig, fordig*; altogether there are 8 examples, but only in word final position. It is more important that the spelling form is applied to foreign words: *Henrig, Normandig*. The French words had not only a long final

vowel, but also it was in the syllable which bore the word stress. There is a difference, however, in the spellings of Part II and Parts IV and V. Part II prefers *Normandig(e)* (83 examples), *Henrig* (12 examples), Parts IV and V have no final ⟨g⟩: *Normandi* (Part IV 19 examples, Part V 2 examples), *Henri* (Part IV 19 examples). There are other French words with ⟨g⟩: *Clunig, Lumbardige,* 1 example each. There is an increasing tendency towards the loss of the vocalised /j/. In the first four parts the proportion of the examples is about 3—6% of all the palatalised forms, in Part V it increases up to 23%: in the middle of the twelfth century a word final ⟨i⟩ invariably meant /i:/. ⟨ig⟩ was frequent in late Old English — early Middle English manuscripts.

9. Another graphic possibility for marking vowel length could have been offerred by the monophthongisation of Old English diphthongs, especially that of *ēa>ǣ*. The table below represents the percentages of the relevant spelling forms in Parts IV and V.

graph	OE *ǣ*		OE *ēa*		OE *ē*		OE *ēo*	
	IV.	V.	IV.	V.	IV.	V.	IV.	V.
a	1,5	22,7	3,8	6,2	1,3	—	—	—
æ	84	51,6	21,4	39,6	1,3	20,—	112,5	1,8
e	8,3	24,7	11,7	41,7	96,1	68,6	37,5	7,1
ea	6,2	—	62,1	4,1	—	—	—	0,9
eo	—	—	1	4,2	1,3	11,4	50	89,6
o	—	1,	—	4,2	—	—	—	0,3
								0,4iu

Part V shows a total monophthongisation of OE *ēa*, with a marginal proportion of the original digraph spelling. ⟨ea⟩ does not occur as an inverted spelling of palatal non-high vowels. The real variation seems already to be between palatal mid and low as there is a high proportion of ⟨e⟩ ~ ⟨ae⟩ in the case of OE *ǣ, ē* and *ēa*. In the representation of OE *ēo* Part V proves to be more conservative than Part IV, using the digraph to a higher proportion. The ⟨eo⟩ spellings of OE *ē* seem to be reversed spellings indicating monophthongisation (Jordan — Crook 1974 : 180ff). Since Germ. *e* before *rr/r+C* (i.e. in an environment for Breaking) or when followed by a syllable containing a velar vowel (Back Mutation)>OE *eo* shows a similar distribution of spelling forms, with the preservation of ⟨eo⟩ in a high proportion; ⟨eo⟩ marking a long vowel cannot be explained as a digraph indicating vowel length (OE *æ* in the environment for Breaking and Back Mutation has no ⟨ea⟩ spellings in Part V. Though *Peterborough* is in the Anglian dialect area, where OE *æ* is described to retract to *a* instead of the sound marked with the digraph, in Part IV we find 74.4% ⟨ea⟩ and only 9.3% ⟨a⟩ spellings.

10. In Old English long consonants were usually preceded by short vowels. Indeed, a short stressed vowel was the prerequisite of consonant lengthening accompanying e.g. *i*-Mutation. In written form long consonants were regularly marked by doubled consonant-graphs. In late Old English intervocalic consonants often appeared doubled; their lengthening was probably accompanied by the subsequent shortening of the preceding vowel. Long consonants could also occur at junctures, through syncopation, by assimilation, etc. In late OE — early ME short vowels in a closed syllable before a consonant cluster became the rule, regardless of how the cluster developed. It is presumed that the rule was already valid in the eleventh century (Jordan — Crook 1974 : 152). It was also proposed that in late OE the doubling of consonant graphs could indicate the shortness of the preceding vowel without necessarily marking a long consonant at the same time (Campbell 1959 : 135f, n. l).

There are a couple of examples of inetymological doublings in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, where the original vowel was long and the subsequent history of the words proves a shortening in them.

Long consonants developed
— through syncope, accompanied by assimilation: *tȳðode>tydde, tidde*;
— at junctures through assimilation: *wif+man>wimman, hǣf+mæsse> >h/lammasse.*

Consonants lengthened
— at morpheme boundary: *þrītig>þrittig, þrittiga, þrittigum,rīcere, rīceste> >ricere, ricceste*;
— at junctures: *nā māne>nammare, nammore.*

Of the above examples *riccere, ricceste* are the most interesting, these being the earliest occurences indicating a short vowel. All the quotations in the *Middle English Dictionary* have the comparative and the superlative with a spelling form which indicates a short vowel, whereas in most cases the spelling of the positive degree could be read as a long vowel (*riche*) indicated by the "mute" ⟨e⟩, or else ambiguous. In present-day pronounciation all three forms have uniformly a short vowel, which usually is ascribed to the influence of the French pronounciation of the word. It could also represent a native development, where the shortened vowel of the comparative and superlative was generalised (reinforced by French pronounciation and derivatives, e.g. *riches*).

11. *Conclusions.* The *Peterborough Chronicle* proves to be a piece of writing of the transitory period. In the copied portions (Parts I and II, and to some extent III) it preserved earlier, Old English scribal traditions, whereas in Parts IV and V we can observe the development of new ones. The examples in Sections 6. and 7. above, reinforce the fact that Old English scribes made no attempt to indicate vowel quantity though they knew the usual mediaeval markers. Even

when they used both acutes and doubled vowel graphs these means served rather to emphasize otherwise short words which were ambiguous in their written forms, i.e. the markers served more as visual aids to facilitate the reading of the text than to mark quantitative contrasts. With the general tendency to monopthhongisation of earlier diphthongs, both in English and Anglo-Norman, graphs became available to be used to mark vowel quantity. There are examples of such tendencies in early Middle English texts (e.g. *Domesday Book,* Feilitzen, 1937 *Eadwines Canterbury Psalter*, Schlemilch 1914), neither of the digraphs ⟨ei⟩ and ⟨ie⟩ reached *Peterborough* to accompany other, unmistakable Norman spelling influences (Clark 1984). Not even native developments were used by the scribe of the Second Peterborough Continuation (Part V) who even abandoned the digraph ⟨ea⟩ and in his reversed spellings indicated a change in the palatal non-high vowels by the alternation of ⟨æ⟩~⟨e⟩. The only, very sporadic, spelling form which can be analysed as a length mark is the appearance of ⟨ig⟩ for /i:/, also present in other late Old English and early Middle English texts, as well as the doubling of consonant graphs which can indicate the shortness of the preceding vowel. Though there were various notational devices available, old and new ones, to represent the existing quantitative contrasts, neither English (Anglo-Saxon) nor Anglo-Norman scribes felt it necessary to employ them systematically in the middle of the twelfth century.

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